

Environmental Assessment

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Purpose & Need



Above: vernal pools; Below: Tule elk; Brenda Tharp photos

Purpose and Need

The National Park Service, under direction from Congress, studies natural, historical and recreational areas to determine their potential for inclusion in the national park system. In November 1999, Congress authorized the NPS to prepare a Special Resource Study of Fort Hunter Liggett (P.L. 106-113 & H.R. 3194 Conference Report, 113 Stat. 1535, 1537 – Nov. 29, 1999). The purposes of this study are:

- to provide information to Congress on the significance of the natural and cultural resources of Fort Hunter Liggett;
- to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of designating the area or some portion of it as a unit of the national park system; and,
- to evaluate alternatives for the management of the areas declared excess by the Army.

The study was conducted following the process established by the National Park System New Area Studies Act (P.L. 105-391, 16 U.S.C. Sec. 1a-5). This law requires that these studies be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This *Environmental Assessment* has been prepared in order to address the environmental and socioeconomic consequences of each management alternative considered in the *Draft Fort Hunter Liggett Special Resource Study*. According to NPS policy, an environmental assessment rather than an environmental impact statement is sufficient for a

special resource study if the area does not meet the standards for inclusion in the national park system, or if no NPS management alternatives are considered.

The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission's recommendations regarding partial realignment of Fort Hunter Liggett resulted in the Army's preparation of an environmental assessment that addressed the transfer of excess property. This *Environmental Assessment* is based in part on the analysis of the Army's *Environmental Assessment for the Disposal and Reuse of the BRAC Property at Fort Hunter Liggett* (US Army Corps of Engineers 2000b).

The 1995 BRAC Commission determined that certain structures within the Fort Hunter Liggett cantonment area were excess to the Army's needs. Ownership and management of these areas therefore must be transferred to other agencies or organizations. This draft study report was prepared with the recognition that Fort Hunter Liggett is an active Army Reserve training installation. The action alternative presented in this draft study report supports the Army's need to transfer the BRAC excess property to other agencies. Through this study process, the NPS is considering alternatives that would protect nationally significant resources on the BRAC excess property within Fort Hunter Liggett, and ensure that these resources are available for public enjoyment.



The Milpitas Hacienda, Richard Crusius photo